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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE BOATING LAW ADMINISTRATORS

Environmental Standards Division
U.S. Coast Guard
Department of Homeland Security

October 28, 2003

DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION
DOCKETS

Docket Management Facility
(USCG-2003-14273) - 32
Department of Transportation

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RE: Mandatory Ballast Water Management Program for U.S. Waters

With respect to docket # USCG-2003-14273 and specifically the section on the *Discussion of Proposed Rulemaking*, the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) writes on behalf of the 56 state and territorial Recreational Boating Safety Programs to strongly support and encourage the adoption of the proposed rule to convert the voluntary Ballast Water Management (BWM) Program into a mandatory BWM program. Our association believes this action is an important step in strengthening and enhancing the safeguards regarding the introduction and spread of aquatic nuisance species on our nation's waterways.

As the national representative of the state and territorial authorities responsible for the oversight of recreational boating safety programs, our members are routinely tasked with the management and maintenance of tens of thousands of miles of waterways including controlling, mitigating and preventing the spread of nonindigenous aquatic species. Our member states, in addition to numerous Federal agencies, spend hundreds of millions of dollars each year to contain the spread of aquatic nuisance species which have been proven to inflict significant economic impacts on natural resources in the marine environment, maritime navigation, municipal water supplies, recreational boating participation and biological diversity.

Since ballast water and structures within ballast water holding tanks have been demonstrated to harbor an array of nonindigenous waterborne species and are shown to be primary vectors for the introduction and spread of aquatic nuisance species (ANS) throughout our maritime system, NASBLA maintains the Coast Guard's proposed rule change will better enable the agency to manage and contain the transmission of ANS in a prudent and cost-effective manner that will not create a significant or disproportionate economic burden for the regulated community. Moreover, we believe the economic trade-offs and net benefits to our national maritime interests alone associated with this regulatory action outweigh the costs by an order of several magnitudes.

The difficulties in eradicating ANS once introduced to a sensitive waterway ecosystem coupled with the rapid transmission throughout contiguous and noncontiguous water bodies across the U.S., as well as the persistence of these organisms in the marine environment, necessitates an aggressive and sustained response to this challenge. Our association urges the Coast Guard to adopt this proposed rule as the first of several reasonable and rational methods for monitoring, managing and controlling this significant environmental and economic risk. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important and timely proposed rule making.

Sincerely,

Alvin Taylor, NASBLA President